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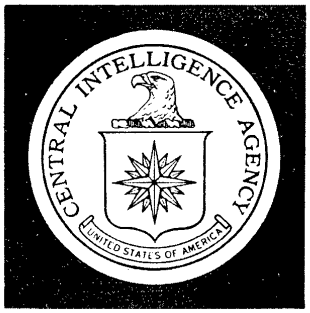

The President's Daily Brief

21 January 1969

19

~~*Top Secret*~~

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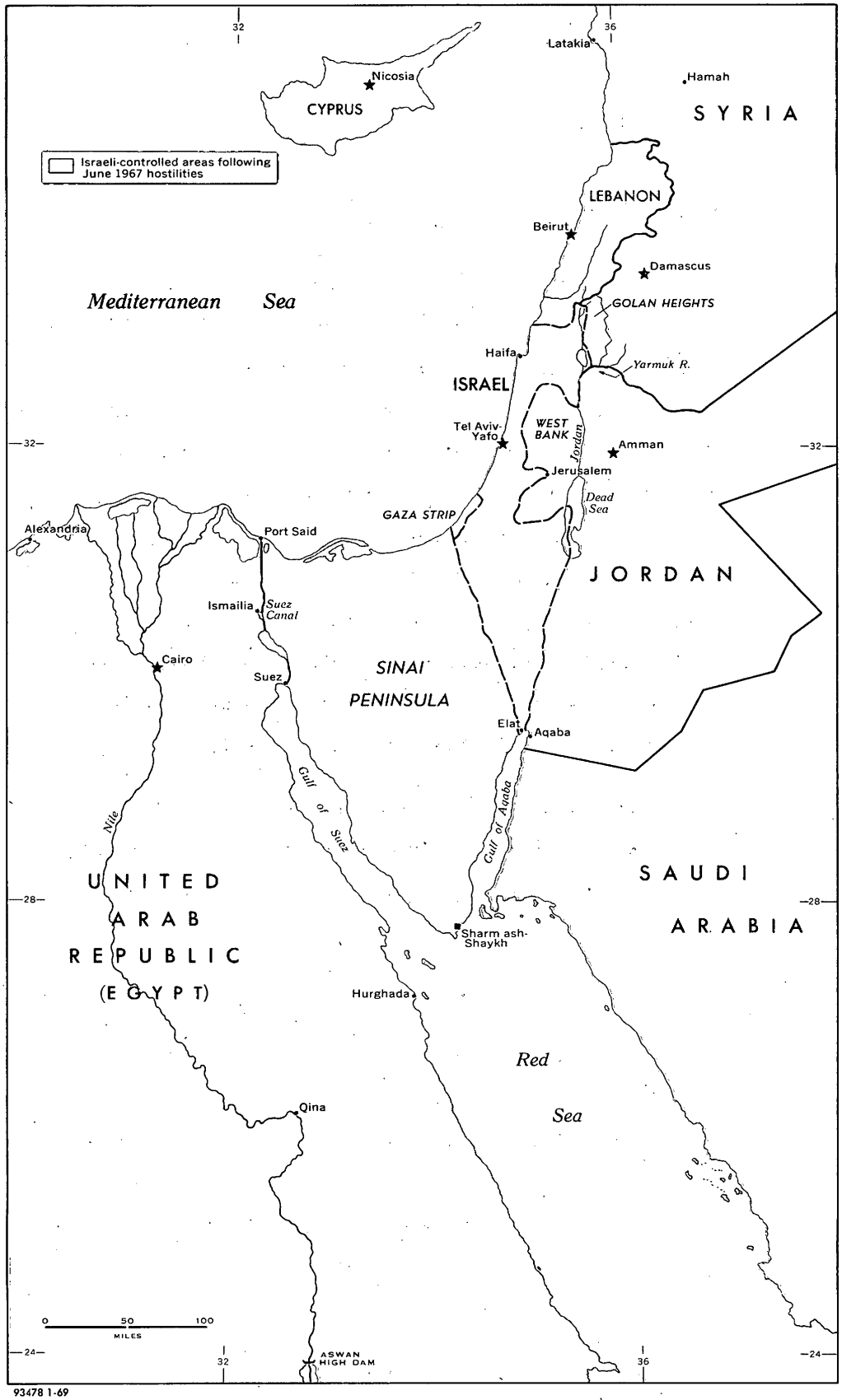

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

The Iraqis are becoming the most militant of all the Arabs states directly concerned with the problem of Israel.

50X1

Iraq, which has no common border with Israel, presumably is driven by its own serious internal difficulties to appear the most Arab of all the Arab states.

* * *

The ranking Egyptian representative in Washington--a Dr. Ghorbal who sits in the Indian Embassy--yesterday professed surprise at the sharp American reaction to the newspaper Al Ahram's recent vilification of US policy. He told Deputy Assistant Secretary Davies

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that such publishing practices were not something unknown in other countries--even in the US. Ghorbal claimed, however, that Egypt had acted to "end this chapter" before a new administration took over. He hoped the two countries could now look forward, not backward to past differences.

EUROPE

Officials of Kiesinger's party say the Germans will delay a decision on the Nonproliferation Treaty until Kiesinger learns what the new US administration's tactics will be. Kiesinger told a meeting of his party's parliamentarians recently that he expects intensive consultations with the US on the issue after the administration has settled in.

The Germans are also pressing the Soviets for some clarifications. The issue here is Moscow's claim that it has the right under the UN charter to intervene in West Germany to prevent a resurgence of Nazism. Before they sign the treaty, the Germans want some kind of assurance that the Soviets will renounce or at least not press this interpretation.

One knowledgeable German official told our embassy that he thinks Kiesinger realizes Bonn cannot withhold its

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signature if it obtains satisfaction from the US and the Soviets on these points.

* * *

At Annex today we discuss possible Soviet and East German pressures against West Berlin.

* * *

Pompidou announced publicly last week that he is in the running for the presidency when De Gaulle steps down. Moreover, he has strongly intimated [redacted] 50X1 [redacted] 50X1 that he has De Gaulle's blessing. His pronouncements have stimulated new speculation that De Gaulle is thinking of retiring soon.

Pompidou has played his cards extremely well since he was ousted from the premiership last July, keeping his fences mended with the Gaullist parliamentary group, supporting De Gaulle on crucial issues such as the Israeli arms embargo, and still making it clear that he is not a slavish follower of the President. His prospects have been further improved by Couve's lackluster performance as premier.

Soviet Affairs

The Soviets are still having trouble with their largest operational space launch vehicle, the SL-12. The booster, which has a thrust of three million pounds, [redacted] 50X1

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[redacted] It compares roughly in thrust to the US Saturn 1B, but our rocket is more sophisticated and more reliable. 50X1

We believe that the Soviets intend to use the SL-12 as the workhorse of their space launches through the 1970s. It was apparently designed for circumlunar and deep space operations, such as Mars and Venus probes. It was first flight-tested in March 1967. Since then, it has been fired nine times, but only four without mishap.

* * *

[redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

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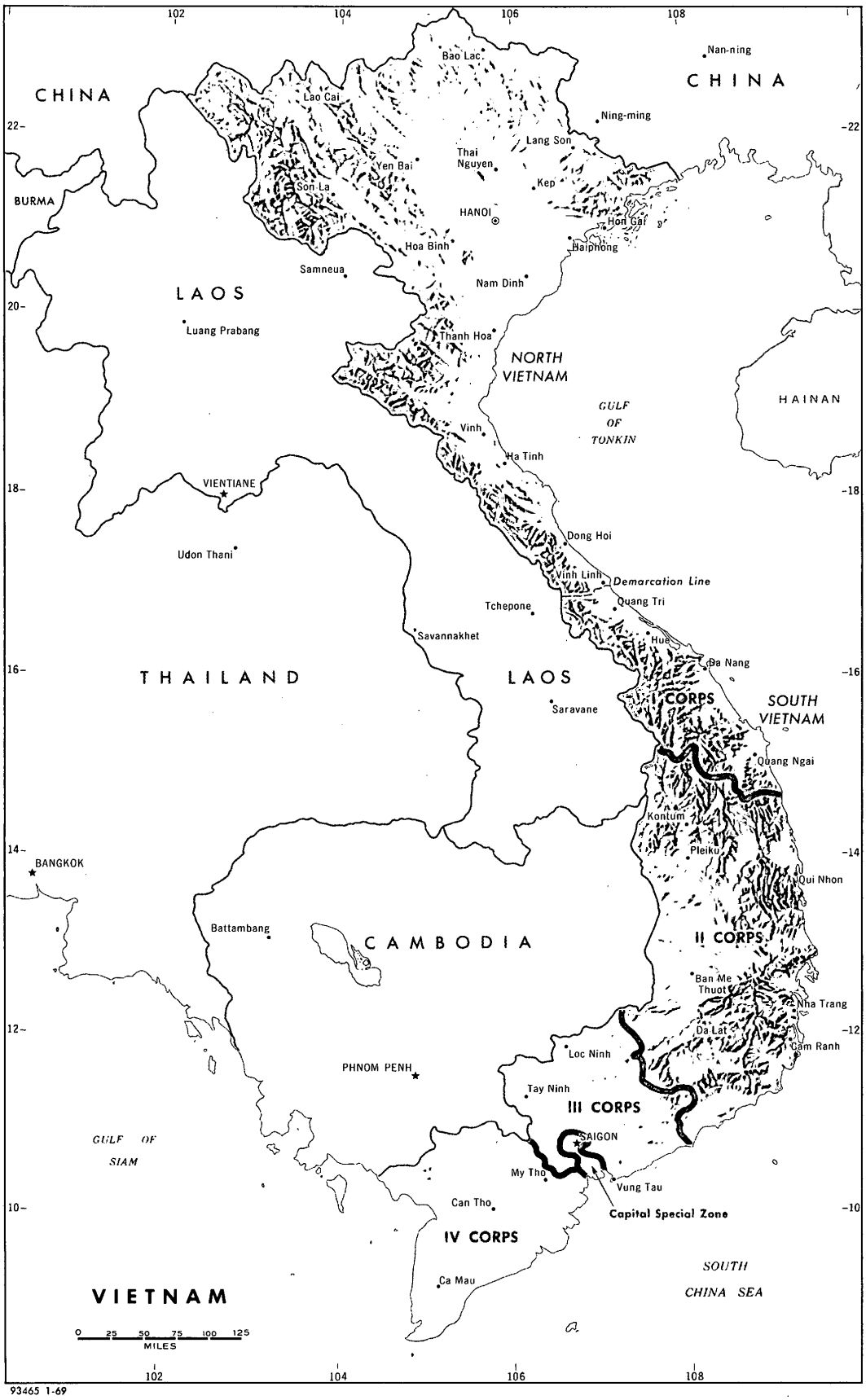

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VIETNAM

The pace of Communist military activity, which was stepped up last weekend, continues at a relatively high level. A number of small-unit actions and terrorist incidents were reported.

The enemy appears through these actions to be seeking control over a greater segment of the population. This is an important consideration as the substantive phase of the talks in Paris begins. In the past few weeks, the Communists have also increased acts of mass intimidation, such as assassinations, terrorism and threats of violence, kidnapings, and attacks on small populated centers.

The Communists made a unique effort to lay out their case to the new US administration in two secret meetings with Ambassadors Harriman and Vance on 14 and 17 January. Although their remarks were couched in familiar terms, Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy were far more forthcoming about Communist political objectives than in any previous encounters with US negotiators.

A demand that the US accept the "reality" of the situation in South Vietnam was the nub of the Communist

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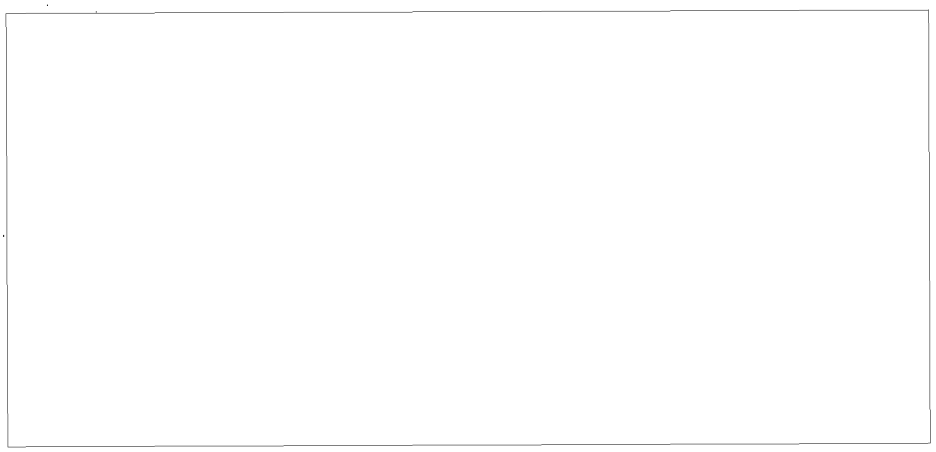
argument. For them, "reality" requires a solution which guarantees the Communists a share of political power in the South and which gives them a clear shot at eventual reunification of the country under Communist control. Despite Harriman's rejoinders that reality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, Le Duc Tho indicated that this objective remains fundamental for the Communists; he made every effort to convince his listeners that Hanoi will persist in the war until it is achieved.

Le Duc Tho, in particular, made clear that Hanoi does not intend to let the US off the hook in Vietnam unless the Communists obtain some tangible political rewards. He said specifically that they would not accept a gradual withdrawal of US forces which was keyed to the consolidation of the GVN's position. Tho strongly suggested that the Communists will try to prevent such a gradual US disengagement, if necessary with military force. 50X1



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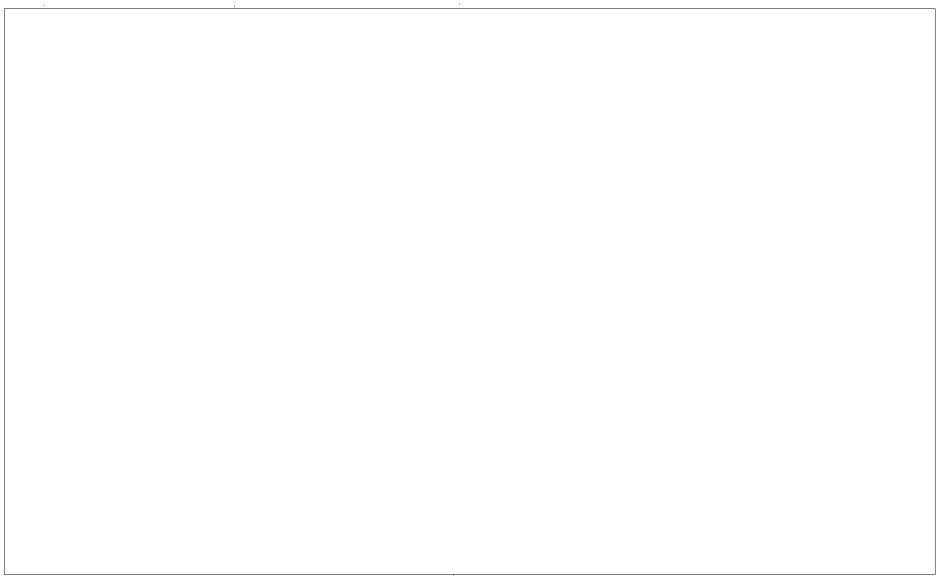

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

JAPAN

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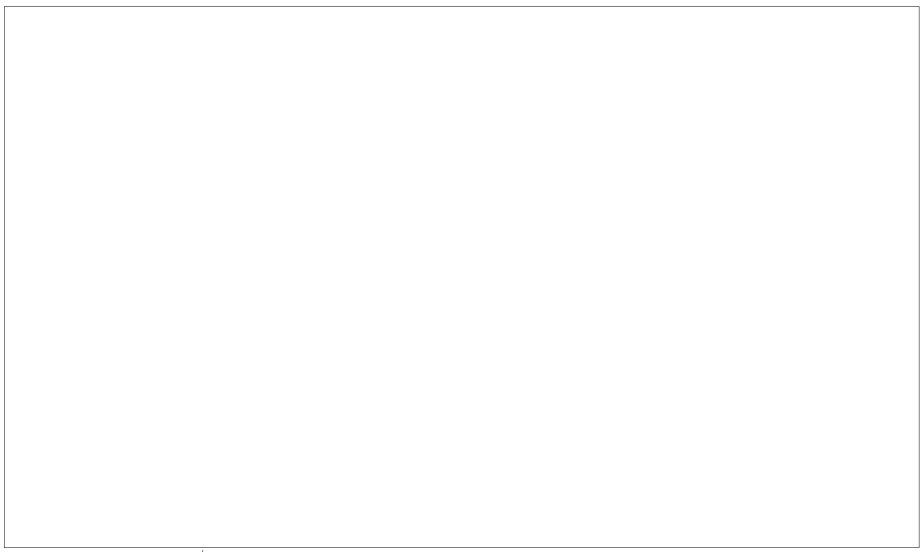

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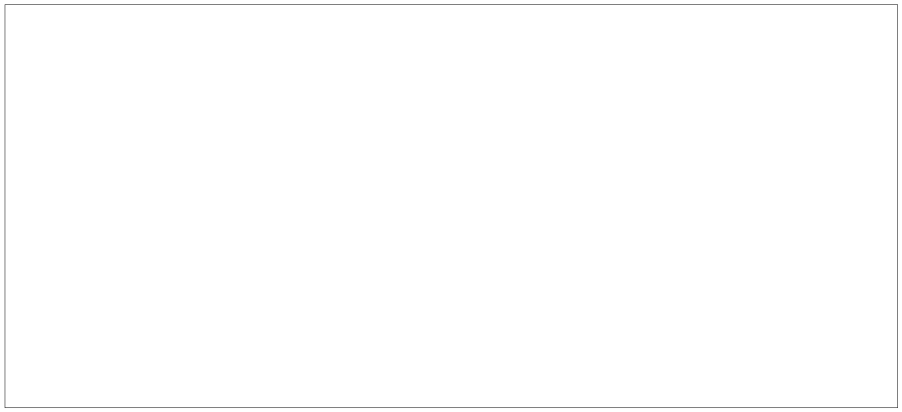
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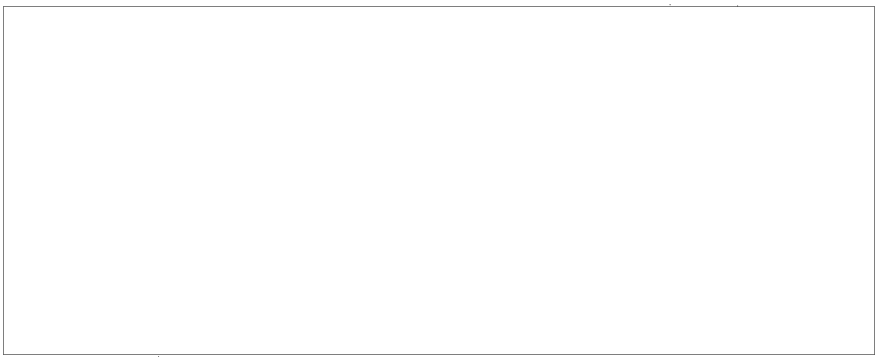
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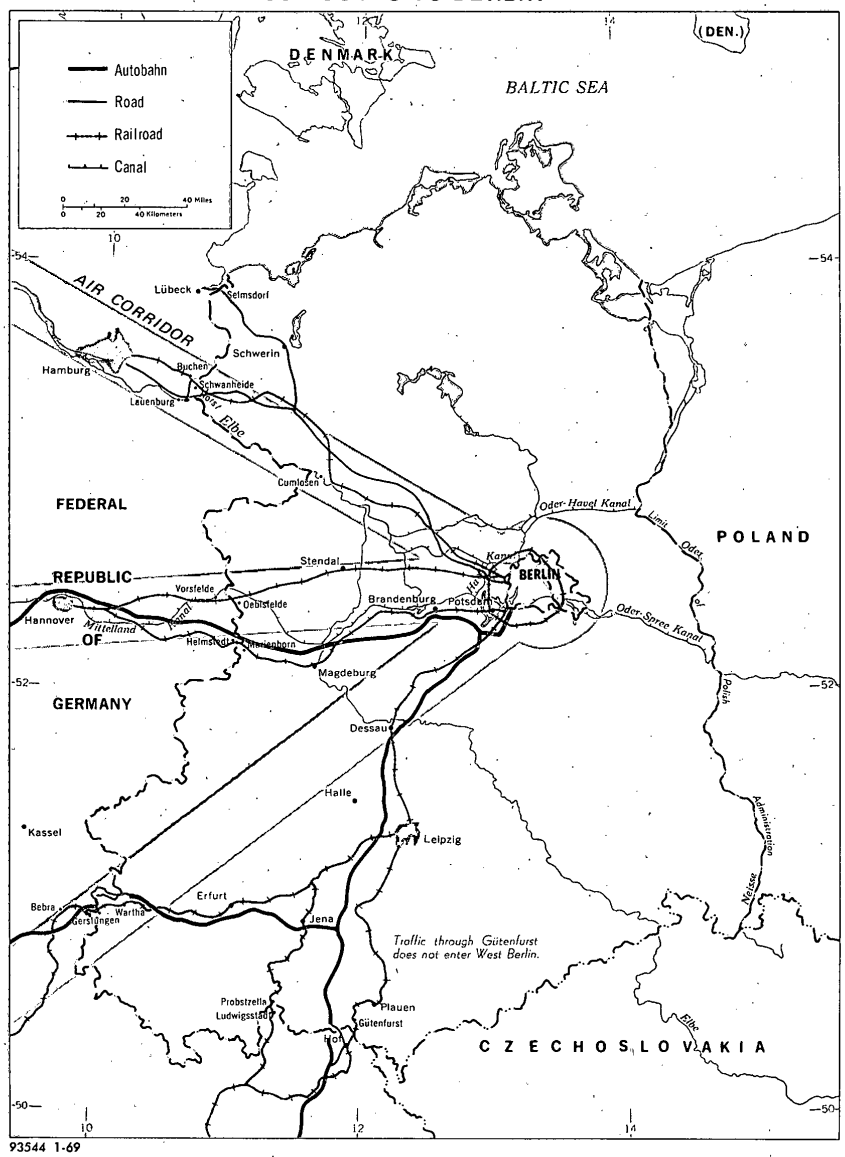
WEST GERMAN ACCESS ROUTES TO BERLIN



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ANNEX

Soviet and East German Pressure on Berlin

SIGNIFICANCE: When West Germany's Federal Assembly convenes in Berlin on 5 March, the USSR and East Germany may decide to harass the city or the access routes to it. A serious and sustained challenge which would set Soviet-American relations on a course of hostility early in the new administration seems unlikely. Lesser harassments, however, would confront the US with the perennial problem of finding an appropriate response which at the same time satisfied the Germans and won the concurrence of our French and British allies.

* * *

On 5 March 1969 the West German Bundesversammlung (Federal Assembly) will convene in West Berlin to elect a new West German president. The Soviet Union made oral statements to the US, UK and France on 23 December 1968 protesting the forthcoming Bundesversammlung session, using the familiar argument that West Berlin is a separate political entity, not part of the Federal Republic. The early protest appeared to be for the record, but did allude to "retaliatory measures."

In subsequent diplomatic contacts with Bonn and the Allies, Soviet protests have, as expected, grown somewhat stronger. Moscow has been playing on West German and Allied differences over the issue, but as yet has given no

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sign that it has finally decided on what course of action it may adopt. It has even been hinting that it might accept the meeting if the USSR got, in advance, some concession from Bonn on bilateral affairs.

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Both Moscow and Pankow can be expected to launch another propaganda campaign as March approaches, and some type of harassment of the city may occur at the time of the meeting itself. The USSR, West Germany, and other US allies will be closely watching US reaction to any such Communist threats to West Berlin as a key indicator of how foreign policy will be conducted by the new administration.

The Pros and Cons, From Moscow's Viewpoint

There are grounds for thinking that Berlin will escape serious pressures this time. The Soviets want the West to forget their invasion of Czechoslovakia and to cooperate in restoring an atmosphere of reduced tensions in Europe. This consideration presumably led them to veto any East German harassment of the city last October

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and November when West Berlin was the site of allegedly provocative meetings of the West German parliamentary committees and the Christian Democratic Party. Furthermore, Moscow will have to calculate whether it wants to put its relations with the new administration at risk so soon after the Inauguration.

On the other hand it is possible that by next March Moscow may be inclined to end what it has called its "great restraint" concerning West German political meetings in the city. The USSR probably continues to be under pressure from the Ulbricht regime to permit Pankow to do something more than talk about "provocations," and Moscow may believe it should not continue fending off its most loyal ally. And the Soviets may judge that certain kinds of limited harassments could produce important divisions among the three Allies and Bonn. Finally, Moscow may wish to let the new administration know that it cannot tolerate forever what it considers deliberate political aggravations in Berlin.

Soviet Options

Should Moscow decide to provoke an incident over the Bundesversammlung session, it has a variety of options to choose from. Extreme measures which would approach a repetition of the blockade of 1948 are unlikely. It also seems unlikely that the Soviets would

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take actions directly affecting the western Allies. Should the Soviets nevertheless decide to risk a direct encounter with the Allies, they could use the same type of limited and well-controlled measures as they did in the last Berlin crisis of April 1965, when they closed the autobahn to all traffic for various periods of time, "reserved" airspace in the corridors, and buzzed West Berlin with low-flying jets.

A less risky undertaking would be for the USSR to permit the always-ready East Germans to take some action affecting only West Germans. Pankow could employ many harassing tactics, including an outright closure of the surface access routes to West German travelers or, short of this, the introduction of new procedures to complicate and limit this traffic. East German measures which affect only West Germans have proven difficult to counteract. The West has little leverage over the East Germans, and the US, UK and France on the one hand and Bonn on the other have argued inconclusively over who should take the lead in applying sanctions against Pankow.

Allied Reactions

Both the British and the French recommended against the Bundesversammlung session being held in Berlin, but have accepted the German decision. Should the East Germans harass the West Germans, the UK and France might

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be disposed to do little except protest, although the British, at least, would be interested in aligning their position with that of the US. Both the UK and France, however, would react sternly to any interference with Allied rights.

In the event of harassment during the Bundesversammlung meeting, the West Germans are certain to look to the Western Allies for an appropriate response. The Bonn government itself--and particularly its Social Democratic (SPD) members--would probably remain most reluctant to institute countermeasures.

If the Allies and West Germany could not agree on appropriate countermeasures, this could produce a round of acrimonious exchanges between Bonn and its Western Allies. Relations between the two coalition partners in Bonn might also suffer. In this election year, the Christian Democrats would be tempted to charge that the SPD, by its advocacy of conciliatory and soft-line policies toward Pankow, had encouraged the East Germans to think they could get away with encroachments against West Berlin.

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